

## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF ROBERT CLOONAN, HARC PARENT AND FORMER BOARD MEMBER**

Senator Cassano, Representative Gentile and members of the Planning and Development Committee, my name is Robert Cloonan. I would like to share with you my thoughts about two proposed bills: HB 5142 and HB 5259, both entitled: An act requiring Public Hearings on the Location of Group Homes. I am unable to be at the LOB on February 7, 2011, when oral testimony is to be heard, so I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony.

I live around the corner from a Group Home on Asylum Avenue. It is across the street from St. Joseph College. It is a beautiful home. I recall when the widow who lived in the house passed away and it was put on the market. This was 15 or 20 years ago. I remember hoping that the home would find someone who would take as good care of it as she did. It was always so well maintained - an asset to the neighborhood. It reflected well on its' owner. And guess what? The current owner reflects these same values of pride and the desire to be a good neighbor. You see the new owner is Harc!

I have been involved with the disabled for 41 years. My son Peter is served by Oak Hill and my daughter Anne is served by Harc. You are their voices - especially Peter who is deaf-blind and has never been able to speak a word. Peter also lives in a Group Home - one of about 80 homes run by Oak Hill around the state. (Anne is in a supported apartment in West Hartford) I do not recall any Public Hearings being required when Oak Hill was entering the communities. But I do recall a public hearing in another state involving a group home being considered in the neighborhood of a relative. And their testimony broke my heart because it was all about financial values and not human values.

I know that you understand this issue very well and I hope that, as I said, you can let your colleagues understand that - just as you and I did not need to justify our right to a place in the community - those with intellectual disabilities also do not require justification to live in their homes. If all homes had as much love and caring as our "group homes" what a fantastic community we would be!

Most gratefully,

Bob Cloonan